



## Climate change and local public health in the United States: Preparedness, programs and perceptions of local public health department directors

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**Year:** 2008  
**Journal:** PLoS One. 3 (7): e2838

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### Abstract:

While climate change is inherently a global problem, its public health impacts will be experienced most acutely at the local and regional level, with some jurisdictions likely to be more burdened than others. The public health infrastructure in the U.S. is organized largely as an interlocking set of public agencies at the federal, state and local level, with lead responsibility for each city or county often residing at the local level. To understand how directors of local public health departments view and are responding to climate change as a public health issue, we conducted a telephone survey with 133 randomly selected local health department directors, representing a 61% response rate. A majority of respondents perceived climate change to be a problem in their jurisdiction, a problem they viewed as likely to become more common or severe over the next 20 years. Only a small minority of respondents, however, had yet made climate change adaptation or prevention a top priority for their health department. This discrepancy between problem recognition and programmatic responses may be due, in part, to several factors: most respondents felt personnel in their health department--and other key stakeholders in their community--had a lack of knowledge about climate change; relatively few respondents felt their own health department, their state health department, or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had the necessary expertise to help them create an effective mitigation or adaptation plan for their jurisdiction; and most respondents felt that their health department needed additional funding, staff and staff training to respond effectively to climate change. These data make clear that climate change adaptation and prevention are not currently major activities at most health departments, and that most, if not all, local health departments will require assistance in making this transition. We conclude by making the case that, through their words and actions, local health departments and their staff can and should play a role in alerting members of their community about the prospect of public health impacts from climate change in their jurisdiction.

**Source:** <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2474970>

### Resource Description

#### Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

#### Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

# Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Health Professional, Policymaker, Researcher

## **Exposure :**

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Air Pollution, Ecosystem Changes, Extreme Weather Event, Food/Water Quality, Food/Water Quality, Food/Water Security, Human Conflict/Displacement, Human Conflict/Displacement, Precipitation, Sea Level Rise, Temperature

**Air Pollution:** Allergens

**Extreme Weather Event:** Drought, Flooding, Hurricanes/Cyclones, Wildfires

**Temperature:** Extreme Heat, Fluctuations

## **Geographic Feature:**

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

## **Geographic Location:**

resource focuses on specific location

United States

## **Health Impact:**

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Infectious Disease, Injury, Mental Health/Stress, Respiratory Effect, Other Health Impact

**Infectious Disease:** Foodborne/Waterborne Disease, General Infectious Disease, Vectorborne Disease

**Foodborne/Waterborne Disease:** General Foodborne/Waterborne Disease

**Vectorborne Disease:** General Vectorborne

**Mental Health Effect/Stress:** Mood Disorder

**Respiratory Effect:** Upper Respiratory Allergy

**Other Health Impact:** Heat stress

## **Medical Community Engagement:**

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change

A focus of content

## **Mitigation/Adaptation:**

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation, Mitigation

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## Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Policy/Opinion, Research Article

## Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified